

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations

General Certificate of Secondary Education

RELIGIOUS STUDIES A (WORLD RELIGIONS)

PAPER 3 - Buddhism

2303/1

MARK SCHEME

Specimen Paper 2003

- 1 (a) Describe the ceremony in which a person becomes a Buddhist monk or nun. [8]

Answers might describe some of the ceremonies such as shaving the head, taking robes, receiving a new name and undertaking the 10 precepts. A better answer might include issues such as conditions which have to be met; novice-ship, temporary membership, and the symbolism of the rites.

- (b) Explain how following the lifestyle of a monk or nun might help a Buddhist become enlightened. [7]

Answers might simply describe daily life. A better response might explain that the Sangha is a more suitable environment for spiritual practice with fewer distractions; e.g. supportive atmosphere, time for study and meditation, no personal or material attachments. Answers could also consider whether personal relationships, possessions or a career distract one from a spiritual path, or what 'enlightenment' is.

- (c) 'There is no need for monks and nuns in modern society.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Buddhism in your answer. [5]

Any argument is acceptable, but could discuss material versus spiritual values or make the point that dana [generosity] offers laity the opportunity to develop a more generous attitude.

- 2 (a) Describe how Buddhists celebrate Wesak. [8]

Celebration of the birth, enlightenment and death [parinibbana] of the Buddha. Answers might be mostly descriptive of a typical celebration (e.g. use of lights or lanterns, extra dana to monks and nuns); a better response might relate the events to renewing one's commitment to the Three Jewels, which might include taking on further precepts for the duration of the festival.

- (b) How and why might the life of a Buddhist be changed by going on a pilgrimage? [7]

Answers might show a descriptive awareness that the Buddha was enlightened at Bodh Gaya, under a Bodhi tree, and that he preached his first sermon at Sarnath, thus beginning 'Buddhism'. A higher level of response could explain that such a journey could help deepen or re-kindle a Buddhist's faith and practice, and that merit or good kamma could be gained, or might consider that a pilgrimage could be seen as a metaphor for the journey along the 'path' of life.

- (c) 'Peace and happiness are to be found within your mind, so going on pilgrimage is unnecessary.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Buddhism in your answer. [5]

Any argument could be made; a Buddhist dimension should show awareness that these practices were not taught by the Buddha, and some understanding of their purposes and possible abuses could be considered. A higher level response might discuss mindfulness, or fully appreciating the 'here and now'.

3 (a) What are the main beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism? [8]

Answers might describe beliefs common to all Buddhism, or offer very brief points. Better answers should bring in a range of distinctive beliefs. Examples might include some of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, gurus, reincarnation of lamas, the bardo state.

(b) Explain how belief in rebirth might affect the life of a Tibetan Buddhist. [7]

Answers should consider how belief in karma and the realms of rebirth might provide both positive and negative motivation. A better response might recognise that all rebirths result in dukkha, and the goal is to escape the cycle. Answers might also consider the distinctive emphases of Tibetan Buddhism such as devotion to a tulku, or the meditative practice of seeing all beings as one's mother in a previous life and its resultant compassionate effect.

(c) 'In a religion, all people should worship in the same way.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Buddhism in your answer. [5]

Answers might explore whether the exclusivist assumption behind the statement is a fair one when applied to Buddhism. Different schools and practices could suit different individuals. Themes common to different Buddhist schools might be identified.

4 (a) Describe the use of rupas (statues of the Buddha) in Buddhist puja (worship). [8]

Answers might simply describe the features of rupas, with perhaps some awareness of different mudras and styles. Better answers might be aware of differences in views between Theravada and Mahayana, and the use of rupas to help recollect qualities such as wisdom and compassion, and to focus on the example of the Buddha.

(b) Explain how puja (worship) might affect the daily life of a Buddhist. [7]

Answers might simply describe a shrine with basic explanations of the symbolism of light, incense and flowers. Better answers may give a broader picture: puja helps the Buddhist to think about the Three Jewels and positive qualities in Buddhism. No obligation in Buddhism to attend public places of worship. Giving offerings are acts of dana (generosity), and gain good kamma. Preparing and performing puja stimulates the five senses, so the Buddhist is using the whole being in worship. It helps prepare the mind for meditation.

(c) 'Being religious doesn't make you a good person.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Buddhism in your answer. [5]

Any argument is acceptable, but better answers might consider what are the purposes of religious practice in Buddhism as well as religion generally, and whether these purposes are achieved.

5 (a) What is the importance of the First Precept (non-violence) for Buddhists? [8]

Answers might be aware that it refers to not killing or harming, and draw on obvious examples of this; better responses might show how it includes all sentient beings, and how it helps develop compassion and an understanding of anatta and interdependence.

(b) Explain the difficulties which might be faced by a Buddhist who wishes to show a commitment to the First Precept. [7]

Answers might refer to diet in terms of not eating meat; a higher response may consider less obvious issues such as the rearing of animals for food, animal products in other materials and issues such as vivisection, abortion or euthanasia. Answers might also point out that one purpose of the monastic life is to aid commitment to keeping the precepts fully.

(c) 'A caring person should be a vegetarian.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Buddhism in your answer. [5]

Mark according to LoR; a Buddhist case might add awareness of the belief in karma and rebirth, and that most Buddhists are not vegetarian.